

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 ICA-11 MCT-02 IO-13 /096 W

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R 310900Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY LOME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4740

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LOME 2807

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT PINR TO

SUBJ: MERCENARY SAGA (CONTINUED)

BEGIN SUMMARY: AT A MEETING ON AUGUST 30 PRESIDED OVER BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER, DIPLOMATIC CORPS WAS TREATED TO A TALE OF FURTHER MERCENARY PLOTTING AGAINST PRESIDENT EYADEMA BY A SOLDIER-OF-FORTUNE NAMED DAVID TOMPKINS. TOMPKINS SAID HE HAD BEEN SENT TO TOGO IN JANUARY 1.78 TO PREPARE A PLAN TO KILL THE PRESIDENT BY BLOWING UP HIS CAR. WHEN HE PERCEIVED THAT TOGO WAS NOT THE OPPRESSIVE DICTATORSHIP HE HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE, HE DECIDED TO INFORM THE TOGOLESE OF THE ON-GOING PLOTTING AGAINST THEM. TOMPKINS ACCOUNT PINPOINTED GHANAIAN INVOLVEMENT IN A CONTINUING SERIES OF SO-FAR UNSUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS. ALTHOUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTER REQUESTED THAT THE CHIEFS OF MISSION PROTECT THE SECRECY OF THE MEETING, TOMPKINS

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STORY CAN BE EXPECTED TO BECOME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE IN DUE COURSE. BY EXPOSING THE GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT'S ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT, TOGOLESE MAY BE TRYING TO PRESSURE GHANA INTO CUTTING ITS TIES WITH ANTI-EYADEMA MERCENARY OPERATIONS. END SUMMARY

1.CHARGE WAS SUMMONED ON SHORT NOTICE TO A MEETING OF

chiefs of mission presided over by the foreign minister the morning of August 30. Foreign Minister Akakpo-Ahianyo opened the meeting by recalling that President Eyadema had been the target of mercenary operations in September and October of 1977. Togo now had information to indicate these operations were still going on. Some of the mercenaries had voluntarily approached the Togolese government with information on the plots and he would turn the meeting over to the mercenaries who would tell their own story. He said the Togolese did not wish this story to be published in any form and asked the diplomatic corps not to talk to reporters.

2. Although two mercenaries were brought before the gathering, John Banks and David Tompkins, only Tompkins spoke to the group (through an interpreter. Both were identified as British. According to Tompkins, the operation had its origins about two years ago when members of the Olympio family (former president of Togo assassinated in 1963) made contact with Colonel Tom Finan, then serving as an instructor in the Ghanaian Armed Forces. The Olympio family offered to finance the mounting of an operation for the purpose of removing Eyadema and over-

throwing the government. Shortly thereafter Finan went to England and hired several former British members of

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special forces to come to Togo and prepare a report on the feasibility of amercenary-organized coup d'etat operating with the assistance of a small number of Togolese. The team reported that it was possible to remove Eyadema, but without at least passive assistance of the Togolese army, it would not be possible to seize control of the government. The following year the Olympios again contacted Finan to say they had obtained the support of members of the Togolese army and assured him the Togolese army would not intervene to save the government. (The interpreter, who had obviously been present in earlier interrogations, often varied from Tompkins English version. At this point the interpreter avoided all mention of military authorities and repeatedly truncated Tompkins references as "cadres" or "authorities" giving the impression that only civilians were involved.) Finan then again went to England to form a team to carry out the assassination of Eyadema. The Olympios supplied the arms and put up the money to provide for air transportation. The arms came in on a constellation. (Comment: The US registered constellation N-273-R first landed in Lome on November 16, 1976. It was abandoned by its crew

AND LATER DESTROYED BY FIRE ON OCTOBER 21, 1977.)

3. TOMPKINS SAID THAT AT LEAST THREE UNSUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS WERE MOUNTED AGAINST EYADEMA. SEVERAL OF THE MERCENARY TEAMS CAME TO TOGO VIA GHANA. IN EACH CASE THE OPERATIONS FAILED ONLY DUE TO "FREAKISH" CIRCUMSTANCES. AFTER THE FAILURE OF THE THIRD OPERATION IN OCTOBER 1977, TOMPKINS WAS RECRUITED TO FORM A TEAM OF 13 MEMBERS TO TRY AGAIN. IT WAS NECESSARY TO FORM A NEW TEAM BECAUSE THE MERCENARIES BELIEVED THAT BECAUSE OF THE INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO THE TOGOLESE VIA AMERICAN AMBASSADOR PALMER TOGOLESE AUTHORITIES KNEW THE NAMES OF MANY PARTICIPANTS IN THE EARLIER OPERATIONS.

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4. IN JANUARY 1978, TOMPKINS CAME TO TOGO VIA GHANA TO PREPARE A PLAN FOR ASSASSINATING EYADEMA BY PLACING EXPLOSIVES UNDER THE ROAD USED ALMOST DAILY BY THE PRESIDENT TO DRIVE FROM THE MILITARY CAMP TO THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE BUILDING. TOMPKINS RECONNAISSANCE CONVINCED HIM THAT THE SECURITY FORCES WOULD BE COMPLETELY UNABLE TO HANDLE SUCH AN ATTEMPT AND IT WAS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE SUCCESSFUL IF EXECUTED.

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5. TOMPKINS THEN SAID THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO INFORM THE TOGOLESE OF THE LATEST PLANNED OPERATION AFTER HE VISITED TOGO BECAUSE HE FELT HE HAD BEEN MISINFORMED OF THE NATURE OF THE TOGOLESE GOVERNMENT. TOMPKINS AND HIS TEAM HAD BEEN TOLD BY FINAN THAT TOGO WAU BEING RULED BY AN OPPRESSIVE DICTATOR OF THE TYPE OF IDI AMIN DURING HIS RECONNAISSANCE VISIT IN JANUARY TOMPKINS HAD BEEN ABLE TO SEE FOR HIMSELF THAT TOGO WAS A STABLE AND PEACEFUL COUNTRY AND THAT THE PEOPLE WERE FRIENDLY AND MAKING PROGRESS TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT. TOMPKINS WAS CONCERNED BY THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN HIS OBSERVATIONS AND WHAT HE HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY TOLD, AND DECIDED HE COULD NOT GO THROUGH WITH THE OPERATION. SINCE HE FEARED FOR HIS LIFE ONCE HE TURNED INFORMANT, HE ASKED JOHN BANKS TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE TOGOLESE AMBASSADOR IN BRUSSELS AND TO EXPLAIN THAT THE MERCENARY

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OPERATION WAS CONTINUING AND TURN OVER CERTAIN FILMS AND DOCUMENTS WHICH TOMPKINS HAD IN HIS POSSESSION. TOMPKINS THEN SAID HE COULD GO INTO MANY DETAILS BUT THAT HE HAD TOLD THE ESSENCE OF WHAT HE KNEW AND WAS NOW PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS. AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF DETAIL HE HAD SUPPLIED THE TOGOLESE AUTHORITIES, HE SAID THAT HE HAD LEARNED THAT IN OCTOBER 1977 THE REASON FOR THE FAILURE OF THE MERCENARY TEAM'S OPERATION WAS QUITE FORTUITOUS. THE MERCENARIES WERE BASED AT A LOCALITY CALLED VILCABAMBA. THE PLAN WAS TO ENTER TOGO IN CARS OVER BACKROADS NORMALLY USED BY SMUGGLERS. THE GHANAIANS HAD SUPPLIED MILITARY PERSONNEL TO SERVE AS DRIVERS (THE INTERPRETER INTERPRETED MILITARY PERSONNEL AS "SPECIAL SERVICE" PERSONNEL). NEAR THE BORDER THEY WERE IN THE PROCESS OF CHANGING FROM GHANIAN TO TOGOLESE CAR PLATES WHEN THEY WERE ARRESTED BY THE BORDER POLICE, WHO TOOK THEM TO BE SMUGGLERS. THE WHOLE GROUP WAS TAKEN TO GHANAIAN POLICE HEADQUARTERS. GHANAIAN MILITARY TRIED TO PREVENT THEIR GROUP'S ARREST, BUT CARRIED NO IDENTITY DOCUMENTS. THE BORDER POLICE, HOWEVER, ALLOWED THEM TO MAKE A PHONE CALL AND IN VERY SHORT ORDER THE POLICE RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO RELEASE EVERYBODY. THE POLICE WERE TOLD THAT THEY WERE SPECIALISTS IN ANTI-SMUGGLING OPERATIONS AND WERE USING

THE SMUGGLERS OWN METHODS TO CATCH THEM.

6. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION BY THE NIGERIAN AMBASSADOR CONCERNING INVOLVEMENT OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES, TOMPKINS REPLIED THAT WELL-PLACED GHANAIAN MILITARY ELEMENTS HAD BEEN GIVING SUPPORT TO THE MERCENARY OPERATIONS. HE DID NOT KNOW IF THIS EXTENDED TO THE TOP OF THE GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT. (THE INTERPRETER DID NOT TRANSLATE THE LAST SENTENCE.) IN A SOMEWHAT FUZZY CLARIFICATION,

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TOMPKINS SAID HE WAS TOLD THAT THE GHANAIAN ECONOMY WAS ALMOST BANKRUPT AND THAT SMUGGLING OVER THE BORDER WITH TOGO HAD BECOME AN EMBARRASMENT TO THE GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT, THUS THE GHANAIAN GOVERNMENT HAD REASON TO WANT TO GET RID OF EYADEMA AND MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH THE OLYMPIO FAMILY. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE OLYMPIO FAMILY HAD STRONG CONNECTIONS IN GHANA AND, SHARING A COMMON INTEREST, BOTH THE OLYMPIOS AND THE GHANAIANS USED EACH OTHER.

7. THE CHARGE ASKED FOR FURTHER DETAILS CONCERNING THE USE OF THE AMERICAN-REGISTERED CONSTELLATION IN THE OPERATION. TOMPKINS SAID HE HAD NO DETAILS BUT HAD HEARD FROM ANOTHER MERCENARY THAT THE PLANE HAD BEEN BOUGHT FOR \$86,000. THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LED TO ITS ABANDONMENT ARE TYPICAL OF THE ERRORS OF JUDGEMENT UNDER FINAN'S LEADERSHIP. THE TWO PILOTS HAD NOT BEEN AWARE OF THE NATURE OF THEIR CARGO UNTIL THE PLANE WAS UNLOADED IN LOME. FINAN THEN ASKED THEM TO IMMEDIATELY FLY OUT AS SOON AS THE CARGO WAS OFFLOADED. REALIZING THAT THEY HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN AN ILLEGAL OPERATION, HE PILOTS INSISTED THAT FINAN PAY THEM THE REST OF THE MONEY HE HAD PROMISED THEM OR THEY WOULD INFORM THE TOGOLESE AUTHORITIES OF WHAT THEY KNEW. ONCE FINAN PAID THEM OFF, THE PILOTS ABANDONED THE AIRPLANE AND LEFT FOR GHANA. THE PLANES USED IN LATER OPERATIONS WERE PILOTED BY PEOPLE WHO WERE KNOWING MEMBERS OF THE PLOT TO AVOID A REPETITION OF THE CONSTELLATION INCIDENT.

8. AFTER THE MEETING, THE CHARGE ASKED MINISTER OF INFORMATION JOHNSON, IF THE OLYMPIO FAMILY HAD THE FINANCIAL MEANS TO MOUNT A SERIES OF OPERATIONS AS DESCRIBED BY TOMPKINS. JOHNSON CATEGORICALLY SAID HE BELIEVED THEY DID AND THAT THERE WAS NO NEED TO SUSPECT ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF FINANCING WERE INVOLVED. THE CHARGE OVERHARD PRESIDENT EYADEMA'S SECURITY

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ADVISOR, JOSEPH SERVANT, ASK MINISTER JOHNSON IF THEY WERE SURE THAT TOMPKINS HAD TOLD ALL HE KNEW AND SUGGEST THAT IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO GIVE HIM THE THIRD DEGREE (CUISINER). JOHNSON SAID THAT TOMPKINS HAD COME VOLUNTARILY TO THE TOGOLESE AND HE WAS SURE THAT HE HAD TOLD ALL HE KNEW. THE GAPS AND OBSCURITIES IN HIS STORY WERE CAUSED BY THE COMPARTMENTED NATURE OF THE OPERATION.

9. COMMENT: DESPITE THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S INJUNCTIONS TO SECRECY, THE TOGOLESE MUST BE AWARE THAT TOMPKINS STORY WILL RECEIVE WIDE CURRENCY IN LOME AND EVENTUALLY BE PICKED UP BY THE PRESS. SINCE THE GOVERNMENT IN GHANA HAS CHANGED SINCE THE EVIDENCES OF GHANAIAN COMPLICITY RELATED BY TOMPKINS, THE GOT MAY BE SEEKING, THROUGH THIS MEETING WITH THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA TO CUT ANY CONTINUING TIES WITH FINAN'S MERCENARY OPERATIONS. IT WOULD APPEAR POSSIBLE THAT GHANA COULD SAVE FACE BY PLACING THE BLAME ON THE OUSTED ACHEAMPONG.

10. THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT PRESIDENT EYADEMA PARTICIPATED DIRECTLY IN QUESTIONING OF TOMPKINS AND BANKS AND HAS REQUESTED THEIR ADVICE ON HOW TO IMPROVE HIS PERSONAL SECURITY. THIS INFORMATION ON CONTINUING MERCENARY PLOTTING, EVEN AFTER EXPOSURE OF THE OPERATION OF LAST OCTOBER, MUST BE DEEPLY DISTURBING TO THE EYADEMA GOVERNMENT. YOUNG

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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TAGS: PINS, PINT, PINR, TO, GH, (EYADEMA, GNASSINGBE)
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